

2 Samuel 17 - Thursday, May 18th, 2015

- Chapter 16 ended with Ahithophel giving Absalom evil advice, which he took, and in so doing, burned all bridges of reconciling.
- This was exactly what Ahithophel wanted, such that, he is carrying out his evil plan in his bitter revenge to make David suffer.
- Sadly, he's not through yet in advising Absalom, and as we're about to see, he wants to finish the job of killing David himself.

1 Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. 2 I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. 3 Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace." 4 And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

- While Ahithophel's advice was brilliant strategically and militarily and likely would be met with success, there was one problem.
- More specifically, it was that of an "I" problem. Ahithophel wants to be the "I" instead of Absalom, who wants to be the "I" too.
- You'll forgive the silliness with which I say this but I always want to be the I, and I only want you to be the you, so I get the glory.

- There's another problem, and it's subtle in that it could easily be missed at first read. Notice Ahithophel calls David the king.
- To me, this speaks to Ahithophel's knowledge deep down in his heart that David is the true king of Israel and not Absalom.
- Moreover, when he asks for twelve thousand men, it also speaks to Ahithophel's knowledge that it won't be easy to kill David.

5 Then Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too." 6 And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him, saying, "Ahithophel has spoken in this manner. Shall we do as he says? If not, speak up." 7 So Hushai said to Absalom: "The advice that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time. 8 For," said Hushai, "you know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they are enraged in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field; and your father is a man of war, and will not camp with the people. 9 Surely by now he is hidden in some pit, or in some other place. And it will be, when some of them are overthrown at the first, that whoever hears it will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.' 10 And even he who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men. 11 Therefore I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. 12 So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the men who are with him there shall not be left so much as one. 13 Moreover, if he has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city; and we will pull it into the river, until there is not one small stone found there."

- This is so fascinating for a number of reasons not the least of which is that God has once again given Hushai the exact words.
- We actually talked a little about this back when we were studying through the book of Romans in chapter 12, verses 1 and 2.
- I won't take the time tonight to go into God giving Hushai the wisdom to speak to the part of the brain known as the neo cortex.

- However, I do want to point out why Hushai's advice wins out over Ahithophel's, as we'll see shortly when Absalom goes with it.
- Again, it's important to note Ahithophel's advice if heeded would have succeeded, as this will be germane to our understanding.
- I would suggest that one of the reasons Hushai's advice won out was because God had inspired him to appeal to the "why."

- Conversely, Ahithophel only appealed to the "what" to do in order to kill King David, and even "how" he would go about doing it.
- In other words, he only gives him the data, the information, the facts, and the figures and because of it Absalom isn't motivated.
- Hushai on the other hand, speaks to the "why," which controls Absalom's behavior and decisions by motivating his imagination.

- Notice he says Ahithophel's advice is bad is because his father's men are fighters as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs.
- He then says even Absalom's bravest soldier with the heart of a lion will melt in fear when they hear there's been a slaughter.
- Then, instead of saying I like Ahithophel had, he advises that all Israel should be gathered to you like the sand by the sea.

- Hushai doesn't stop there, he goes onto to advise Absalom saying, "you go to battle in person," and come upon him yourself.
- Then, Hushai goes in for the close and tells him that they'll fall on David as the dew falls on the ground, and none will survive.
- This is exactly what Absalom wants to not only hear but see, namely, the pictures Hushai painted on the canvas of his mind.

Warren Wiersbe in his fabulous book; "Preaching and Teaching with Imagination" says it better than anyone else when he writes; "Absalom heard what Ahithophel was saying, but he saw and felt what Hushai was saying. ... Ahithophel presented concepts without images, so his words were sterile. They failed to give birth to life-changing pictures in Absalom's mind. Hushai, on the other hand, combined concepts and images and won the contest. ... Hushai turned his ears into eyes so that he could see and feel the message and respond positively to it. ... Hushai used words to paint pictures, and he hung those pictures in the gallery of Absalom's mind, pictures taken from the world that both of them knew personally. It was a world in which nobody could number the sand grains on the seashore or hear the dew fall on the grass. Hushai didn't invent a new world, that would be imaginary, he simply used the world that he and Absalom already knew and could imagine.

...In the United States in the '60's, the folk songs of the 'flower people' probably did more to influence government policy about Vietnam and civil rights than did all the speeches given in Congress. Why? Because, like Hushai's speech, these songs painted pictures and stirred the imagination. Songs such as 'Where Have All the Flowers Gone?' and 'Blowin' In the Wind' affected more people in a deeper way than did the press releases from the White House."

14 So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel." For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom.

- This should come as no surprise given that David had prayed God that Hushai's advice would defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.
- Just by virtue of the fact that Absalom would even seek out Hushai's advice after Ahithophel's, is evidence of God's hand in it.
- Actually, God's hand was in Absalom heeding Ahithophel's advice in chapter 16, and in Absalom rejecting it here in chapter 17.

15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Thus and so Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have advised. 16 Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, 'Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.' " 17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed at En Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming into the city; so a female servant would come and tell them, and they would go and tell King David. 18 Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom. But both of them went away quickly and came to a man's house in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down into it. 19 Then the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground grain on it; and the thing was not known. 20 And when Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" So the woman said to them, "They have gone over the water brook." And when they had searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 21 Now it came to pass, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well and went and told King David, and said to David, "Arise and cross over the water quickly. For thus has Ahithophel advised against you." 22 So David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan.

- It's important to note that Zadok and Abiathar the priests, were also spies that David sent into Jerusalem to keep him apprised.
- This is why Hushai goes immediately to them after buying David some time, which he desperately needed before they attacked.
- To me, this speaks to the grace and mercy of God in protecting and directing David, while at the same time correcting David.

23 Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb.

- This is perhaps one of the saddest verses in the Bible, this because, it's the tragic end of a man of God who had become bitter.
- Please know that Ahithophel didn't commit suicide because his counsel was rejected rather, it was he knew they were doomed.
- In other words, he was smart enough to know that Hushai had manipulated Absalom's pride in order to save David from death.

- I'll take it a step further and suggest that this was Ahithophel's last chance to mete out revenge on David by taking his own life.
- The reason being is once David returned to his rightful place on the throne as king of Israel; he'd have him put to death.
- I'm of the belief that he did this out of spite for David because he had the soundness of mind to first put his household in order.

Charles Spurgeon offers some insight into this, "I desire to call your attention to the text on account of its very remarkable character. 'He put his house in order, and hanged himself.' To put his house in order, showed that he was a prudent man; to hang himself, proved that he was a fool. Herein is a strange mixture of discretion and desperation, mind and madness. Shall a man have wisdom enough to arrange his worldly affairs with care, and yet shall he be so hapless as to take his own life afterwards?" ... "Thousands set their houses in order, but destroy their souls; they look well to their flocks and their herds, but not to their hearts' best interests. They gather broken shells with continuous industry, but they throw away priceless diamonds. They exercise forethought, prudence, care, everywhere but where they are most required. They save their money, but squander their happiness; they are guardians of their estates, but suicides of their souls."

24 Then David went to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. 25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab. This Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Jithra, an Israelite, who had gone in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26 So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead. 27 Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the people of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, 28 brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched grain and beans, lentils and parched seeds, 29 honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who were with him to eat. For they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

- The chapter ends with a fascinating account of God providing all David and his men need during this time in the wilderness.
- The reason I find this fascinating is because we're told that all the provisions came by way of the Gentiles and not the Israelites.
- I point this out because often times, God may provide for our needs through unlikely sources in the wilderness seasons of life.